

The Elementary English Review

VOL. XVI

NOVEMBER 1939

No. 7

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of Interest to Elementary Teachers
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(Shop Talk)DOUGLAS GRIESEMER
- Reviews and Abstracts

THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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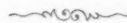
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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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No. 7

Problems in Elementary English Revealed by the New York Regents' Inquiry*

DORA V. SMITH
*Professor of Education
University of Minnesota*

THE REPORT of the New York Regents' Inquiry into conditions in English in the elementary schools of New York is based upon observations in 221 classrooms in twenty-six school systems representative of the wide variety of conditions existing throughout the state. It is not possible in the brief time at my disposal to discuss in detail the findings of the Inquiry. It seems wiser to center attention this morning upon some of the major problems brought into sharp relief during nine weeks of daily observation from the kindergarten to college in schools varying in size and richness of offerings from the palatial buildings of the wealthy suburbs of New York City to the most tumble-down frame structure in the remote Catskills.

One emerges from such an experience convinced, above everything else, of the supreme importance of those elements in the development of control over lan-

guage which form the basis of this morning's discussion; namely, the social and psychological factors inherent in growth in language power.

Fundamental to the development of effective expression is a rich background in experience. It becomes a major concern, therefore, of the teacher of English in the elementary school to see that the classroom provides an abundance of meaningful and productive experiences. For such an environment is essential not only to the stimulation of a natural urge to expression, but to the development of concepts necessary to growth in vocabulary and in the associational power essential in the manipulation of ideas. It is discouraging to note that those pupils who come from the most privileged homes are usually afforded a rich school environment, whereas, in the majority of cases those pupils whose homes provide a paucity of experience are furnished in the classroom four bare walls, a blackboard, and a piece of chalk.

Will you go with me into a first grade room in "up-state" New York? Six pic-

*Office of the New York Regents' Inquiry, 304 East 35th Street, New York City. This paper was read before the joint meeting of the National Conference on Research in English and the American Educational Research Association, February 28, 1939, in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Smith's complete report will be published by the Conference in 1940.

tures of the story of Goldilocks and the three bears decorate the side wall, and at the front are two apples cut out of paper in the heart of New York's apple orchards. One little girl, obviously the best in the class, stands in front of the room, heels together and arms held stiffly at her sides, repeating the story of the three bears. The other thirty-nine sit with hands clasped on the edge of their desks. That is the language situation in the majority of classrooms visited in New York state. After ten minutes of recital by the little girl, I asked the teacher if she would mind interrupting the solo performance to engage the children in conversation. She became much embarrassed over so unusual a question and finally stammered out, "We haven't come to that yet in the course of study."

It is a law of mental and social development, as it is of plant life, that *growth is conditioned by the feeding area*. One of the fundamental criteria of successful teaching of English expression is, therefore, the richness of environment furnished within the classroom, and the naturalness of the situation which makes normal expression inevitable.

May we contrast this first grade with a kindergarten in another city? In one corner of the room is an improvised garage in which boys push out and in, cars of their own making—one a Ford, one a Buick, and another a Pierce Arrow, we learn from the conversation. In another corner a group of girls with an array of dolls and a teddy bear talk over the tea cups in a playhouse constructed for the purpose. The wall at the back of the room presents a display of leaves and wild flowers found on a recent excursion about the neighborhood, while a corner in front holds the shelves of a classroom library with the children's favorite titles conspicuously displayed. There is

no dearth of language in such a situation, and little apparent nervousness or fear of communicating with others.

A second condition significant for the development of language is recognition of those social adjustments and emotional strains inherent for individual children in the more or less formal situation in the classroom. In one of the towns on the Finger Lakes, a morning kindergarten served the children of the more wealthy townsfolk and an afternoon kindergarten those of the rural children whose parents work, for the most part, on estates throughout the county. The language problems in the two were strikingly different. In the first, there was no lack of conversation. A wealth of stimulation and a breadth of vocabulary based on a wide variety of experiences were evident to an observer. In the afternoon, a group of shy, hesitant children, inexperienced in the social give and take necessary to normal association with others, met for the relating of the day's news. One boy had a significant contribution to make. He had told the teacher on his arrival at school, and she had rejoiced with him in his good fortune. When the time came for him to tell the children in an informal circle at the teacher's feet, he became completely tongue-tied, retreated into himself, and could not announce the news. Finally he was persuaded to whisper it again to the teacher, who relayed it for him to the class. A baby calf had been born on his farm that morning.

Experiences such as these in the classroom throw one back upon the major problems of instruction in the use of language: first, to furnish a richness of environment basic to normal expression, and second, to watch with especial care those emotional and psychological conflicts which impede progress in the use of language for many boys and girls.

Recently a junior high school child replied to a question as to how well she liked English, "Oh, I can't do their exercises very well." It is this narrow view of the function of instruction in language which has blinded us to the major problems involved in our teaching and has limited our progress in the development of control over language. Two-thirds of all the elementary schools visited in the Inquiry retain the old inflexible daily time schedule providing, for example, ten minutes for language instruction, fifteen minutes for spelling, five minutes for fire and accident prevention, fourteen minutes for penmanship, forty for reading, and ten for the memorization of poems by the so-called grade poets. This complete failure to integrate the various elements of English among themselves makes possible the fact that the elementary schools of New York State are accelerated two years in spelling and more than one year in English usage, while at the same time they are retarded, on the average, a year and a half in ability to express ideas. At the high school level the correlation between ability in usage and ability in expression was .21. In the elementary school not only were punctuation exercises completely divorced from any real situation in writing, and lessons taught in effective opening sentences never intended to open anything at all, but spelling was as likely to be taught, in departmentalized or co-operative programs, by the teacher of arithmetic as by the teacher of composition. Fostered in New York by a hierarchy of local, district, and state examinations in technical phases of English, these separate elements of expression persist in many places as discrete subjects with no welding into a unified program in expression involving individual adjustment to a real language situation.

On the other hand, 15 per cent of the lessons observed involved general unit or activity programs. Of these half were in three towns of 50,000 in population or above, and more than two-thirds were in the kindergarten and primary grades.

No one sitting day after day in the elementary school, contrasting classes in segregated drills with those in which an integrated, meaningful program is in progress can fail to be impressed with the fact that the program in language gains immeasurably from association with the latter. Because, however, the whole program in integration is so new as to be subject to modification and improvement, I should like to raise certain questions which seem to me pertinent for the development of language at our present stage of progress with unit or activity teaching.

Tabulation of the frequency of use of identical units throughout New York state reveals the fact that they are limited, so far as the average school is concerned, mainly to five: (1) the grocery store; (2) the neighborhood; (3) the Indians; (4) the pilgrims; and (5) the Dutch. May we examine the effect of such a program upon the work in reading, literature, and the language arts?

In the first place, strict adherence to so narrow a program limits materially the areas of reading experience offered to boys and girls in the elementary school. Certain sixth grade pupils may have a speaking acquaintance with Hans Brinker because he correlates with the Dutch, but be entirely unfamiliar with Tom Sawyer, who correlates with nothing but a good time. And obviously a substantial share of the reading of boys and girls should be for that purpose primarily. Again, no book appears more frequently in the elementary classrooms of New York than the Petershams' *Story Book of Things*

We Use; whereas *Winnie the Pooh*, who, "seeing the pine cones lying all around, murmured a murmur to himself in a singing sort of way," is often conspicuous for his absence.

It is obvious also that the grocery store, the neighborhood, the Indians, the pilgrims, and the Dutch leave out of account completely many of the intimate personal experiences of life necessary to the adjustment of the individual from the point of view of personal orientation to his own powers and limitations, his family, and the intimate associations of everyday life—in short, the very experiences which children, left to themselves, seek first of all in their choice of books for voluntary reading. If, in addition to following a narrow social studies core, the school adopts a policy of *laissez-faire* so far as the guidance of recreational reading is concerned, the problem is especially acute.

What happens under such circumstances is clearly evidenced by the results of the Regents' Inquiry. A seventh grade class in one of the largest cities in the state was writing letters recommending books read in an undirected program in recreational reading. The titles chosen were chiefly those in which younger adolescents are in command, enjoying life together, doing surpassing things, having rare and amazing experiences, emotionally and imaginatively satisfying to children of their own age. *The Bobbsey Twins*, *Tom Swift*, *Nancy Drew*, and *Bomba the Jungle Lad* were prominent among them. The choice of such titles is in keeping, it is true, with all the known facts of the psychology of adolescence. It is also true, however, that when better books similar in appeal are made available (along with those on the grocery store, the neighborhood, the In-

dians, the pilgrims, and the Dutch) boys and girls accept them with alacrity.

In addition to the usual testing program in reading skills and knowledge of traditional titles, the reading habits of boys and girls in alternate grades from the fourth through the twelfth were studied by means of two devices. One was examination of reading diaries of books and magazines read during a three-week period, and the other, a test devised to cover a selection of the children's books of recognized interest and value published within the last twenty-five years. Since the preparation of reading diaries for outside agents offered serious temptation to do something for the honor of the school, alternate items on knowledge of juveniles generally recognized as inferior from the point of view of social and literary values were inserted into the test. These items included such titles as the *Big Little Books*, the *Bobbsey Twins*, *Tom Swift*, and *Nancy Drew, the Mystery Girl*. Recommended titles included books like *Millions of Cats*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, *The Good Master*, *The Earth for Sam*, and *Smoky*. Results showed boys and girls at every level of the school system more familiar, on the average, with inferior books than they were with good ones. More interesting, however, was the variation in growth in individual schools. In some of them, the lead of good books over poor ones increases in each successive grade. In others, inordinate emphasis upon a few set classics beginning with the ninth grade is paralleled by a sudden spurt in the reading of inferior books outside of school.

In general, pupils in the elementary schools of New York state achieve one year lower in knowledge of literature as measured by the Unit Scales of Attainment than in any other major field in elementary education. In general reading

of good books for boys and girls published within the last twenty-five years, their record is lower still. At the eighth grade level, for instance, Q^3 for the highest New York town tested was lower than the median for eight Middle Western towns of better than average standing. In the poor communities such results may be due to a narrow program of local and state testing, adherence to an outmoded program of grade poets, and an almost total absence of children's books except those furnished through the State Traveling Library. On the other hand, the wealthy schools, many of them, on whom the state depends to raise the general average, have gone over to a program built around a social studies core, and have limited their purchase and use of books to the narrow range of interests presented in the type of units already described. In some of these schools, reading diaries show beyond a doubt that children seek satisfactions in cheap juveniles dealing with experiences of boys and girls or with mystery and adventure of a highly sensational type to offset the limited factual program offered in the school.

The present situation in the development of integrated units challenges us to see the reading problem whole, to ask ourselves to what extent the present program provides for boys and girls areas of interest in reading natural to their particular stage of development and suited to the broadening of interests and deepening of experience fundamental to well-rounded living.

What of the program in expression? As has already been pointed out, the movement toward integration appears to have profound significance for the development of normal habits in English expression because of the ample recognition it gives to the social, emotional, and psychological factors inherent in a na-

tural and well-motivated language situation.

Observation, however, leads one to raise certain questions concerning desirable improvements in the initial programs now under way. *There is grave danger, in some schools, of substituting mere opportunity for practice for constructive teaching of language functions.* For instance, it is known from studies of the common social uses of language that ability to make a full, interesting, and effectively presented report is important for both children and adults. In one class where work in composition was correlated with a social studies unit on the Age of Discovery, pupils reported as an English assignment on the lives of noted explorers. Here was an excellent opportunity for actual teaching of the necessary elements of a good report—note-taking, for instance, with a purpose in mind; the proper organization of material; and the best method of presenting it to the class. What happened was that pupils copied in the exact order of their presentation in the encyclopaedia vital statistics about Sir Francis Drake, and read them aloud in uninteresting fashion without raising their eyes from the paper.

Is it not the place of research to assist the teacher in the classroom, in the present state of transition from formal to socially motivated teaching, by determining the extent to which such language powers can be concretely and constructively developed in the social situation afforded by the unit or activity program? Both the frequency of occurrence of such opportunities for meaningful development of language processes and the extent of proficiency actually achieved in them in the unit situation are fundamental problems for research.

The same thing is true in the realm of the mechanics of English. In general,

the New York Regents' Inquiry revealed excessive concern with the mere mechanics of expression in the majority of schools in the state, and retardation in ability actually to express ideas. On the other hand, there is rather definite evidence that pupils in schools where more liberal programs are in vogue do not in many instances live up to expectation in terms of their intelligence in the more mechanical skills in expression. The situation would seem unnecessary if reasonable attention were devoted to these phases of the language program. For instance, it is probably not too much to expect that when a pupil leaves the twelfth grade of an American high school he should be able to write a simple business letter in correct form, granted, of course, very liberal options in the definition of such requirements. A sampling of papers written by pupils in the New York schools revealed that one pupil in a hundred leaving the twelfth grade habitually does so. This is not an argument for a return to the rôle of drill master. *It is rather a plea for the recognition of specific outcomes in language among other eminently desirable objectives of the integrated program.* For example, the only mention of language outcomes in the activity bulletins published by the state department in New York is this: that children, at the close of the activity unit, may be expected to give "evidence of interest in and experiences with expression of ideas by means of symbols."

Surely we are failing in our responsibility to the average teacher in the classroom unless we give her specific guidance in the important outcomes in control over language which we hope to result from the enriched integrated program now developing in the schools.

Finally, it is important also that we

consider the plight of creative writing in the newer curriculum built about a social studies core. It is obvious that creative writing deals primarily with intimate personal reactions to people, to things, and to the widely varied experiences of everyday life. In all probability, such expressions of intimate feeling and the more sensitive mental adjustments are not most favorably elicited by the grocery store, the neighborhood, the pilgrims, the Indians, and the Dutch. It seems imperative that we recognize that fact and give it serious consideration in planning the program in language. We have considerable research now available concerning the normal interests and the inevitable urges to expression inherent in the experiences of little children. Shall we not insist on using them in our program together with the more formal and institutionalized elements in the social scene? That, to me, is one of the major challenges of the present movement to teachers concerned with the program in expression.

A second problem involves a fuller and more intelligent recognition of the opportunities for creative expression afforded by the unit and activity programs already in use in the schools. At present, the tendency is to look upon language as a tool for the recording of facts learned, for the carrying on of business by mail, or for the sharing of reports with others orally in the classroom. Each of these aspects of expression is important; each could undoubtedly be enhanced in value by the application of creative techniques of expression. Practically speaking, there may be a difference of three hundred dollars in proceeds from a school exhibition depending upon whether the advertiser who made the announcement was a creative artist or a dispenser of facts.

Reading In The Experience Curriculum*

HELEN HEFFERNAN

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THE TYPE OF CURRICULUM which organizes learning, not in terms of subject-matter fields, but in large areas of experience or units of work makes a definite contribution to the acquisition of desirable reading interests and habits. This large area of experience or unit of work is taken to mean all the activities and experiences involved in the co-operative investigation of some important aspect of life.

Such a curriculum unit, in order to satisfy generally accepted criteria, would not only involve phases of social life of fundamental contemporary significance, but it would acquaint children with the major facts, relationships and crucial issues related to the area under exploration in a manner to broaden understanding and deepen insight. It would further provide for actual experiences and contact with first-hand materials rather than mere memorization of facts. It would provide opportunity for clarifying and enriching experience by various means of expression such as construction, dramatization, writing, painting, or music. It would stimulate mental activity in purposing, planning, executing and evaluating at constantly higher levels; and finally it would provide for sharing of purposes, activities, and achievements in the miniature democracy of the classroom.

A curriculum unit which satisfied these criteria would inevitably result in con-

comitant growth in reading interests and habits. For purpose of illustration we may consider a curriculum unit which was designed to lead a group of twelve- to thirteen-year-olds to an understanding of Chinese life and culture.¹

In the teacher's preparation of the classroom environment for this curriculum unit there was included arrangements of Chinese porcelains and pottery, pictures of Chinese potters and porcelain makers at work, plaster-of-Paris molds and a potter's wheel. Beautiful Chinese prints, fabrics, costumes, and metal work were arranged. A well selected collection of books on China and things Chinese was placed on the reading table. Two or three were opened at beautiful illustrations. Even the flower arrangements were in the spirit of the Chinese and the colors of the flowers were complemented by backgrounds of bamboo screens or exquisite textiles.

The children were given opportunity to explore the room and to discuss with one another the things they were enjoying. A group discussion period followed in which the children showed great interest in porcelain, and the teacher read "Pies of the Princess," a story of the origin of porcelain in China.

In the exploration of the products of the Chinese which the children found in the arranged environment, they were developing a background of experience

*Read before the joint meeting of the National Conference on Research in English and the Department of Classroom Teachers, February 27, 1939, in Cleveland, Ohio.

¹Based on a unit of work carried on under the direction of Miss Mary Lindsey at the University of California Demonstration Elementary School, Summer Session, 1938.

which would later give meaning and significance to their reading. What does the symbol "porcelain" mean to one who has never seen or touched it? What is "bamboo," or "plaster-of-Paris," or "potter's wheel" unless the concept of "bamboo" or "plaster-of-Paris" or "potter's" wheel" is already a part of the experience of the reader? Schools have sometimes overlooked this important fact that we read only what we already know. Experience must always precede interpretation. Even if the reader says the word it is mere verbalization unless based on experience.

The discussion which followed encouraged the use of language and the development of a speaking vocabulary about the Chinese objects which contributed directly to later facility in reading.

Further exploration of the dish mold, the pictures and the pieces of pottery resulted in many questions regarding the difference between hand and mold pottery, how the mold was made, how color and designs were applied, what the designs mean, how the dishes used in our homes are made. All of the questions were listed and the children were guided to carefully chosen reading materials to find the answers to their own questions. At first the teacher gave careful direction to the exact places in various books where specific information could be found, but later, children were encouraged to use the index and table of contents to locate material and to skim the pages to find answers.

Following the period of reading the group came together to share the information they had found. Since the books were available only in single copies, a genuine audience situation was created for oral reading. Some of the children read a paragraph or two which answered

the question, others reported their findings informally, but the teacher guided the children until they gave the authority for each statement.

After all the information had been shared, an outline was made of the facts learned as a basis for later work.

As the pottery making progressed, the children read *Young Fu*,² a story of life in the handicraft guilds in China, and dramatized the life of Young Fu. The dramatization necessitated the most careful reading as was evidenced in the dramatic play one day when a little girl protested a fellow actor's succinct but un-Chinese "O. K. Grandmother." "How would he have spoken to his grandmother?" inquired the teacher. The little girl showed how much she had entered into the spirit of Chinese courtesy when she bowed deeply and said with the greatest reverence, "It will be as you have said, oh, honorable Grandmother."

Beginning with their interest in pottery, the children explored the guild life of China and compared it with factory life; they compared village farm life in China with farm life as they knew it; they compared family life and customs in China with the life in their own families; they came to understand that China represented another culture; like ours in that it must meet the same basic human needs of food, clothing, shelter, utensils, roads and bridges, as our culture; but that the Chinese meet these needs in a different way. The children inquired about the reason for the difference, and turned to China itself, its mountains, rivers, valleys and climate for their answer. The principle of geographical determinism gradually became apparent as they read to answer their questions, and discussed the way geography had conditioned the lives of these people.

² By Elizabeth Foreman Lewis. Winston.

The beautiful Chinese things in their classroom were evidence to the children that here were a people with spiritual needs to be satisfied as well as material ones. They read and shared their information about the history of the Chinese, their festivals, their ceremonies, their recreation, their literature and poetry, their art and religion.

The press of the day was filled with news items about the war in China. Many clippings came from homes to be placed upon the bulletin board. Serious discussions followed. Why was great China—great in area and population—unable to withstand its smaller aggressor? Why is Japan fighting in China? What interest have we in the problems of the Orient? Some of the discussion would have done credit to far older and more experienced citizens.

A special word should be directed to the creative play related to the study. Every day the children attempted to recreate the lives of the Chinese people. As they expressed in their play the manners and customs of these people, the children realized the inadequacy of their knowledge. The Chinese "fisherman" stood im-

potent beside the "stream" one day and asked, "Just how do the Chinese fish?" Or when "grandfather" was going to visit the graves of his ancestors, the question of how he traveled left the group recognizing the need for more information. They were guided to further reading and soon learned that their play was enriched and more interesting as they had wider and more accurate knowledge about the Chinese. It became great fun for a boy or girl to introduce into the dramatic play some bit of information not generally shared.

In general, what this story illustrates is not a sugar coating to make children swallow the bitter pill of learning to read, but it is a way to make children love reading because it serves their purposes. The subject-matter school views reading as an end. The experience program views reading as a means of achieving worthy purposes. The experience program may or may not produce better readers. There seems to be some authority to defend the thesis that it does, but there can be little doubt that it will lead more children to *want* to read, which is probably far more significant.



The Circus

A Second-Grade Reading Project

VERDIE McMILLAN

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Denver, Colorado

WHEN THE SECOND-GRADE children returned to school after the summer vacation, they were all eager to tell what they had done and what they had seen since school had closed in the Spring.

In their conversation of the first few days, they told of the many things which had interested them. Some had gone to the seashore and dug for crabs. Others had spent their summer in mountain cabins in various parts of the country and were full of stories of their adventures. Still others had gone to some of the big cities where they had visited the zoo and aquariums.

The visits to the zoo fitted in nicely with the one experience which a great many seemed to have had in common, a trip to the circus. The circus had come to our city late in August so it was still fresh in the minds of many children.

Some children had seen only the unloading, but how exciting that had been! Others had watched the parade and had been equally excited over the colorful bands, the clowns and the animals, especially the elephants. Many had seen the wonderful performance under the Big Top, and enjoyed telling how exciting it had been.

While the children told these stories spontaneously, the teacher sat with pencil and paper writing down every thing they said. She also supplied additional information with many pictures from her own files and from the files of the Public Library. A book, entitled *The Circus* by

Klara E. Knecht, Educational Director of the Hagenbeck Wallace Circus, was in her possession. This book was not written in simple enough language for the children to read, but it gave good illustrations of the winter quarters of the circus, the animals in training, the loading and unloading of the animals and properties, the workmen putting up the tents, the dining room, cook house, and the inside of the circus, as well as other activities of the circus which do not ordinarily meet the public eye. The teacher supplied the information necessary to the understanding of these pictures. As a result the children became more and more interested in the circus.

Virginia had not seen the circus, so she went to the teacher and said, "I did not go to the circus this summer, but I have a circus toy at home. May I bring it?" This toy turned out to be a girl on a trapeze and with that as a beginning the circus which was started on one table grew so large that four tables were required to hold it. In fact it rapidly became a three ring circus with a parade of animals around the outer edge. The girl on the trapeze had the center ring, because she got there first, while a dancing elephant and a bucking donkey occupied the other two rings.

Richard was so good at arranging and organizing the toys that he quietly and unassumingly took charge. One day he appeared with sacks of excelsior. "We'll use this for the sawdust," he said. Later Robert brought a box with boards across

the front to resemble the bars on a cage, but with the back entirely open. It seems he trusted his animals. "We'll put the monkey in this and let him look out through the bars," he said. Another box was brought in to be used as a stable, and promptly upon dismissal each afternoon, some of the animals were put to bed under the capable directions of Richard who felt that some of the animals needed this extra attention.

In the meantime the stories which the children had told and which the teacher had written down, were handed back to the children who had told them. They rewrote the stories on 18 x 24" newsprint. These were hung on a rack at the front of the room for all to see and read. Many of these stories were accompanied by large illustrations.

Here is a story told by Joan. "I like to watch Clyde Beatty and his wild animals. He knows how to make the lions behave." Joan's drawing illustrated Clyde Beatty at his best.

Some of these stories were typed, put into booklet form, and placed in the hands of the children. "Why, I can read every word on this page," said Jack who had difficulty in reading. "See! This is my story," said Jane, "Do you see my name under it?"

Reading Outgrowth

"Elephants are such big animals. They must eat a lot of raw meat to make them so large," said Donald.

"Oh, elephants don't eat raw meat; they eat peanuts," said Stephen. "I know because I fed an elephant some peanuts once. His trunk tickled my hand."

"I read a story once in which a baby elephant was given a carrot whenever he did anything well," said Louis.

"They must eat hay, too," said Philip, "Look at this picture. That elephant is eating hay."

"There is a story about elephants in our reader. Perhaps it will tell what elephants eat," said Ralph.

The children were soon deep in their readers, trying to find out more about elephants. All of the books furnished for instructional purposes were scanned not only for elephant stories, but for all circus and animal stories.

A wealth of such stories was found, enough to supply reading material for six weeks at least. 2-B and 2-A books were interchanged whenever it seemed beneficial to the group to do so.

The stories about circuses were read first. As this was the first six weeks of school, the reading habits and reading ability of the children were still unknown. They were taken up in the order of their reading difficulty.

CIRCUS STORIES 2-B

Fifty Flags—"Billy's Bath," "The Big Shaggy Pup."

New Friends—"A Circus Parade in School."

ANIMAL STORIES TO FOLLOW CIRCUS STORIES

New Friends—"Elephant Visitors," "The Elephants and the Water Hole," "Magic Feathers."

Bobbs-Merrill Second Reader—"The Man and the Tiger," "The Camel and the Jackal," "The Camel and the Pig," "The Bear Who Played Soldier," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Little Shepherd."

Progressive Road to Reading—"The Little Jackal and the Lion," "The Camel and the Jackal," "The Cat and His Servant," "The Fox and the Sheep," "The Cock and the Fox," "Little Red Riding Hood."

CIRCUS STORIES 2-A

Children's Own Reader, Book I—"The Circus," "At the Circus."

ANIMAL STORIES TO FOLLOW CIRCUS STORIES

Stories of Animals and Other Stories—"A Trip to the Zoo," "The Clever Monkey," "Bunny Cotton Tail's Plan," "King Jackal," "Dancing Dan."

Elson Basic Readers—"The Camel and the Pig," "The Bear's Picnic," "The Bear and the Children," "The Three Pigs."

Learn to Study Readers, Book I—"Bears," "How to Take Care of a Dog."

Everyday Classics, Second Reader—"The Wise Goat," "The Wolf and the Seven Kids," "The Travels of a Fox," "The Cock and the Fox," "A Visit from a Bear," "Androcles and the Lion."

The extra books in the room which were furnished for recreational reading were used for additional information about the circus and circus animals. Many extra books were brought into the room from the homes and the Public Library as well.

Carry-Over Into the Library Period

Many colorful circus and animal books were at the disposal of the children during their library period. Their interest in the project was such that they chose to read circus and circus animal stories. Occasionally a special period was given to them in their home room when they could tell about these stories.

A list of the books read by these 2-B and 2-A children follows. The list was prepared by Mrs. Elizabeth Dickson, Librarian.

Ezra the Elephant—Marjorie Barrows.
Johnny Giraffe—Marjorie Barrows
The Story of Babar—Jean de Brunhoff
Beast, Bird and Fish—Elizabeth Morrow
Friends in Town and Country—Clara Belle Baker
Johnny Crow's Garden—Leslie Brooks
Johnny Crow's New Garden—Leslie Brooks
Circus Fun—Bertha Smart
Bear Twins—Inez Hogan
Elephant Twins—Inez Hogan
Tooky, the Baby Seal—Berta Hader
Wait for William—Marjorie Flack
Surprise Stories—Marjorie Hardy
The Circus Comes to Town—Veronica Hutchinson
Hop, Skip and Jump (Poems)—Dorothy Aldis
Circus—Eleanor M. Johnson

The Social Science Tie-Up

The circus toys brought in by the children provided a center of interest in the home room. In the Social Science and Art rooms the children made large animal faces. These faces were pasted on paper sacks. The sacks could be slipped on over the head and the animal faces thus served as masks.

Taking Care of Individual Differences in Reading Ability

The division of the children into classes took care of separating the rapid reader from the slow reader for the most part.

In the second grade the stories were studied by the children while the teacher guided them by asking questions for which they were to find the answers. The slow readers were seated in the front of the room near the teacher. She was able to see at once when a child hesitated on a word, or when he lost the place in the story. The easy questions were directed to the slow readers while the rapid readers had to answer the questions that were harder.

In the unsupervised period the children were required to do some lesson taken from the story. If there were ten parts to the lesson, a dividing line was drawn after the first six. All children were required to do six and all who could were to do all ten.

The unsupervised lessons were varied; but each type was given often enough for the children to become familiar with it.

Types of lessons included the following:

1. Who said it? "I am the King of the Beasts."
2. Who did it? Squirted water on Billy.
3. The _____'s feet are made so that they will not sink in the sand.
4. The (tiger, camel) is called the Ship of the Desert.
5. Descriptive word omission
 (Old) Bruin
 (Funny) Clowns
6. Who is:
 Old (Bruin)
 Funny (Clowns)
7. How many?
 How many kinds of bears are mentioned in our story?

In the check-up period the fast readers were often allowed to show their understanding of the story by dramatizing it. They often asked, "May we play the story today?" The slow readers were given time for more oral reading.

Words that gave trouble were written down by the teacher, both in the study period and checking-up period. These words and these only were used in drill. Phonetical word lists were put on charts and used as needed. When a child who had a great deal of difficulty in reading could read the words listed on the chart his name was placed on the chart.

Children who finished their work before the end of the period were given the privilege of reading to themselves from extra books which were provided. These books were arranged in two groups, "very easy," and "easy." The slow readers were encouraged to read from the very easy ones so that they would not be discouraged. The children who read readily to themselves chose books from less simple sets.

Culminating Activity

The entire dialogue was prepared from the children's own reading by the children themselves, and arranged under the direction of the teacher. Animal masks were worn when children represented the various animals. It was presented to their parents. It is given in part here:

GLORIA: A circus came to town a little while before school began this fall. Many of us saw the circus and of course we all wanted to tell what we had seen. I saw an elephant lift a girl up with his trunk and put her on his back. He put his trunk around her again and lifted her down.

EARL: I saw a man ride a bicycle out on a thin rope. They put a chair on the bicycle and then a man got in the chair. They rode back and forth, back and forth on the rope.

JOAN: I liked to watch the ponies run around the elephants in the ring.

GERALDINE: The children told many stories about the circus. We had them typed and put in this little book.

VIRGINIA: I did not see the circus but I had a circus toy that I brought to school to show to the children. It was this girl on the trapeze. Many other children brought circus toys as you can see. Children from other rooms came in and asked to put their toys in our circus. We were glad to have them.

RICHARD: I brought the straw for our circus. I made a circus tent at home. I worked so hard on the circus that Mother said she could hardly get me to eat my supper.

ROBERT: One day a child said that he thought elephants ate raw meat. We began to look through our books to see what we could learn from them about the circus and circus animals. We learned many things which we will tell you.

Parade of Books. (Books used for instructional purposes, extra books, picture books of animals, circus picture books were placed on the chalk tray. Each book was picked up by a child who told briefly what had been learned from that particular book.)

Parade of Animals

GEORGE (to the elephant): What do you eat?

ELEPHANT: I eat hay, grass and fruit. I like for children to feed me peanuts and carrots.

JANE: How do you use your tusks?

ELEPHANT: If I have to lift any heavy load, I put my tusks under it and wrap my trunk around it.

IRWIN: How do you use your trunk?

ELEPHANT: I use it to take a shower bath and to lift things. It is my hand.

GEORGE: Your skin looks funny.

ELEPHANT: My skin is very thick.

GEORGE: It looks like dried mud.

JANE: You are so large that I don't think you can run very fast.

ELEPHANT: We are the biggest animals, but we can run very fast.

(Leland and Philip then show the books from which this information had been learned).

Song "The Elephant."

(Children put on Lion, Tiger and Leopard masks)

LOUANNE (*talking to the lions*): What do you eat?

LIONS (*In unison*): Raw meat!

LOUANNE: What are you called?

LIONS: The King of the Beasts.

LOUANNE: Why do you have such long whiskers?

ONE LION: Our whiskers are as long as our bodies are wide. If we try to go through a hole and our whiskers bend we know we cannot go through it.

LOUANNE: Why can't we hear you walk?

ONE LION: We have pads on our feet just like cushions.

DOROTHY: (*Talking to the tigers*). You tigers are beautiful with your orange and black stripes but we read a story in which you tried to trick a man, but a little jackal got the better of you. The name of the story was "The Tiger and The Man."

DOROTHY: (*Talking to the leopards*). You leopards are beautiful too, with your spots. We read a story called "Magic Feathers" in which none of you were good neighbors to Jocko the Monkey. I was glad when he frightened you away.

(*Foxes, a wolf, monkeys, a camel, bear, giraffe, zebra, horse and hippopotamus enter and converse with the children in a manner similar to the foregoing dialogue.*)

BABBETTE: You have seen our Parade of Books. In our Parade of Animals you have heard us tell the things we learned in these books. In our Social Science and Art Room, Miss Collie taught us how to draw and cut these animals, and to make the animal masks. We made the giraffe because it was spotted, the elephant because it was plain, and the zebra because it had stripes. We learned that if we made lines or dots on one side of a face we must make them on the other side also, because most animals have a design on their faces. We want our designs to balance. In the Library Mrs. Dickson helped us to find interesting books about the Circus and the circus animals. In the Music room Mrs. Levein taught us our animal songs: "The Elephant" and "The Noah's Ark." Gloria will now sing "The Noah's Ark."

NANCY: We hope you have enjoyed hearing about our circus and circus animals as much as we enjoyed reading about them. We hope you will come again. Goodbye.

Teaching Literature In The One-Teacher Rural School

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THE RURAL CHILD is entitled to all the pleasure and understanding of life that literature gives. There is no reason why his reading should be limited to farm journals, government bulletins and mail order catalogs.

It is not difficult to justify the contention that this subject has a very important place in the crowded curriculum and busy day of the rural school. For one thing, it is the finest kind of motivation in teaching the mechanics of reading. For every child there is enjoyment in a story. When he discovers that reading is a key that unlocks the wonderful storehouse of literature, he very definitely feels the need for the skill to use that key.

Perhaps the most fundamental aim of the school should be to increase and widen the experience of the child that he may understand, to some extent at least, the world into which he has been born. Literature can do this. A farm boy may have few opportunities to know anything at first hand except his home, school and the countryside with its village and trading center. But books can take him to the most remote parts of the earth and back to any point in the historical era. No matter how isolated his community may be, literature is the magic carpet that will carry him beyond the mountains and the seas.

The really educated person must have many interests. Left in his own environment many a farm child has little chance

to develop an interest in anything but the process of wrestling a living from the soil. If he is to qualify for the duties of true citizenship he needs a much wider range of intellectual concern. In the formative period there is nothing that can do this better than a wide acquaintance with good literature.

The net result of the increased experience and broadened interests which literature can give is a refinement of mind and tastes which we call culture. Such a background is necessary for a true interpretation of life. Only when one sees his existence through the eyes of enlightenment does he understand the significance of his own being and his relation to contemporary forces.

One of the aims of the modern rural school is the development of initiative. The quality of being able to originate independently of other influences presupposes the trait of imagination. That it does not exist in every individual may be true, but where it is found it may be developed. Certainly there is no field of culture in which there are greater possibilities for arousing the power of imagination than in the stirring selections included in literature.

The use of leisure time is one of the problems of modern life. In the slack season on the farm, the need for wholesome and enjoyable entertainment arises. If good reading is available, the person with a liking for good literature need never grow lonesome or feel lost. One

of the aims of teaching literature is to provide this liking for worthwhile books.

A knowledge of literature counteracts the effects of loneliness. There is no question that many tasks on the farm and in the farm home are monotonous. Indeed, there are many types of employment in such a situation where a person works day after day entirely alone. Whether his thoughts under such circumstances are enjoyable and profitable will depend upon his outlook on life and upon the background of mental material which he possesses. The content of literature has much to offer the person who must spend long hours with himself.

Literature develops an appreciation of the environment. On the farm one comes in constant contact with nature and the changing seasons. The person who knows something of the myths and legends with which other peoples have sought to explain and interpret these ever-changing and recurring phenomena will certainly better enjoy and appreciate the plants, animals, and birds about him than if he knows nothing of literature.

A large number of the boys and girls who grow to maturity on the farm do not remain there, but move on to their places in the industries and professions. In these new situations they have contacts with persons educated in urban schools. It is distinctly a handicap to them if their childhood training has been strictly utilitarian and they lack the cultural advantages possessed by those with whom they associate.

In a similar way those who do remain on the farm also are conscious of a handicap when they listen to modern radio programs or read current newspapers, magazines and books. Lacking a background of an acquaintance of the materials of literature, they are, to a very great extent, cheated out of many of the

good things of life which modern invention make available to those equipped to enjoy them.

In short, the rural child is entitled to the same culture as his city cousin. It may be impossible for him to possess the same advantages of museums, theaters, art galleries, and concert halls, but there is no good reason why the literature of his race should not be as available and meaningful to him as to anyone else. But the school must create in him the desire and appreciation for good books or he cannot have even this type of culture.

Although it is a fairly simple matter to demonstrate that literature has a definite place in the curriculum of the one-teacher rural school, it must be recognized that there are certain difficulties that keep it from being well taught. Some of these difficulties are inherent in the typical attitude of rural people toward education. There are others for which a common organization of the country schools is mainly responsible.

There has persisted in the minds of many people in the rural areas the same ideas regarding education that thrived during the pioneer period. It was the opinion of the frontiersman that the function of schooling was to fit the individual for transacting business or otherwise to assist him in making money or improving his station in life. The real worth of learning in their eyes was measured by its utility. Story books were only a temptation to waste time and contained material that served only to clutter up minds that had better be employed with learning how to cipher or to spell or compose business letters. To some extent this attitude still remains among those for whom life is a constant struggle with the forces of nature. To study something from which no monetary return can be expected still seems something like a sin.

In view of this attitude it is not strange that the rural community in directing its own school affairs has been willing to accept and employ many teachers with meager training. Some of these instructors have been persons who themselves have not possessed a wide acquaintance with nor an appreciation of literature. Others have had a fairly adequate preparation in this field but have accepted the utilitarian point of view in their own philosophy and have not regarded it as worthwhile to make any great effort to acquaint their pupils with the literary materials of the human race.

Certain problems of organization in the one-teacher rural school have encouraged the persistence of the ideal of utility in school work. Mueller in his *Progressive Trends in Rural Education* gives the results of a survey of courses of study for rural schools in forty-four states. He found that these courses name a total of seventeen subjects that are being taught, not including literature which was considered as reading. Of these, nine are almost universal. When one considers that the one-teacher school may include as many as seven or eight grades and usually at least four groupings he gets an idea of how many separate classes the daily schedule of the school may list. Since the great majority of teachers try to hear recitations in all classes every day this means that each class gets very little time or attention. It is hard to do anything thoroughly. Add to this the practice of using the traditional method of making daily textbook assignments and testing upon their mastery and you have a fairly good picture of the organization difficulties that prevent the effective teaching of literature in rural schools.

The usual reading text-book contains a variety of selections of literature often well-chosen. If the child during each of

his eight years in the elementary school could come to understand and appreciate all that is contained in one or more such volumes, he would have a fairly good introduction to this field. The thing that happens too often, however, is that this material is taught only as practice material in oral or silent reading. Much emphasis is placed upon the mastery of reading mechanics such as the pronunciation and meaning of individual words and the ability to do objective exercises with little or no attention to real meanings and appreciation. With such procedure a child may study a selection as a reading exercise and complete his work without any comprehension or enjoyment of the story or poem as living literature.

Another thing that contributes to the inadequacy of the average rural pupil's acquaintance and enjoyment of good literature is the meagerness or total lack of rural library facilities. Very often there are only a few nondescript volumes showing the effects of rough usage and poor care and unsuited to school use. School directors frequently feel that they do not have funds with which to buy books, or that books are unnecessary. Without a library where the child can seek and choose what he wants to read and will enjoy, there is little possibility of instilling a lasting love for literature.

After this discussion of the difficulties that tend to keep literature out of its proper place in the rural school curriculum we shall consider some suggestions for teaching it effectively and giving to it the attention which it so clearly deserves. These will be based upon the writer's own experience in rural school work and will include only what he believes to be practical and usable in the average situation.

First there must come on the part of the teacher, to be shared as far as possible

by the parents and directors, a recognition of the place of appreciation as an objective in education. Without a realization that preparation for living should include learning that embraces the cultural subjects as well as those whose utility is more evident, there is little chance for literature in the true sense to be given the place it deserves. For the teacher this will depend upon her training and her comprehension of the needs of her pupils. For parents and school officials it may involve a program of adult education carried on through the medium of community clubs under the leadership of teachers and enlightened supervisors.

One of the first problems that the teacher must face is how to provide time that is necessary to really teach literature effectively. The first thing that occurs to us is to cut down on the time devoted to arithmetic, which surveys show receives more than any other subject in the rural curriculum, and which usually includes a great deal of material for which the average person never finds any use. However, mathematics may be so strongly fixed that it is hard to dislodge. At any rate other procedures are necessary. The time devoted to oral reading can usually be reduced and class time need not be used for checking silent reading exercises. This will make it possible to devote a great deal more time to the discussion and interpretation of the significant meanings of a selection that may be so easily missed by a child in his undirected reading. Besides this the pupils should be given the opportunity to hold unsupervised discussions of their outside reading in which they exchange their impressions of the stories they have read and enjoyed.

The unit method of teaching holds great possibilities for the rural teacher. Some nature interest such as the appearance of the first flowers or a change of

seasons may suggest a theme that the pupils see illustrated all about them. A great many of their school activities may center about this one idea for a time. In literature they may search for what the poets and story-tellers of the race have written when confronted by the same situation. The teacher may present one poem or story quite completely, and having thus illustrated the possibilities of what is available may encourage the children to find and share with the class other selections on the same theme. With such a plan it is often possible to combine several grades and to correlate several subjects, thus approaching the modern ideal of integration if the theme has been one of real child interest. It gives an excellent opportunity for co-operation in finding materials, for committee work and for teaching discrimination in the selection of materials. It reduces the time necessary for recitation and makes the class period one of pleasurable learning.

Opening exercises and the assembly periods are often omitted from the rural school program because the teacher feels them to be unnecessary or that there is insufficient time. When scheduled they are not always wisely used. Games and contests should be used during play periods and rainy day intermissions. Especially in situations where the matter of teaching the mechanics of reading necessarily involves so much time that there is little opportunity for teaching literature as such, the opening exercise period has great possibilities for some excellent fun with stories and poems. It is a fine time for story telling which every elementary school child enjoys. Stories may be read by the teacher or by the older pupils who read well. Short poems simple enough to be understood by everyone may be discussed and even committed to memory while interest is high. Short in-

teresting book reports may be given with the idea of helping others in the selection of books.

Much of what is being suggested here depends upon the availability of good library facilities which it has been pointed out are often lacking in the rural community. It must also be remembered that most rural homes possess few books. And not many country schools have public libraries from which they may borrow reading material. In spite of all these discouraging tendencies it must be recognized that since class periods are universally much shorter in the rural schools the time which the pupil himself is responsible for using for self-improvement is correspondingly greater than that of the child in the graded school. It is not reasonable to expect him to apply himself to the study of text-book material during all of his free time. As a matter of fact there is often a great deal of idleness and wasted time among pupils supposed to be studying in the rural school even if discipline is such that they continue assiduously to stare at their books. But almost any child would rather read than be idle if he has access to a library of interesting books.

One of the responsibilities of the rural teacher is to establish a library if she finds none and to improve it if there is one. In some cases this may be done by convincing board members that books are very necessary in good teaching. In others it may be necessary to raise funds through money-raising enterprises such as entertainments, plays or old-fashioned box socials. Whenever it is possible to interest the pupils and secure their co-operation in such an undertaking it will nearly always succeed.

In such a situation the selection of books is very important. In far too many rural school libraries the shelves are load-

ed with books chosen by adults to suit adult tastes, books which hold no interest or fitness for juvenile readers. In others, the titles are appropriate for the reading of the older children, but with nothing for the pupils in the lower grades. In some cases there is little or no variety, or the list includes volumes containing stories of inferior literary quality.

There is no good reason why these disappointing conditions should exist. Even if a teacher does not have a broad acquaintance with children's books and collections, there are available so many aids to the selection of good books for school libraries that she can easily obtain the information she needs in choosing suitable titles.

One such pioneer list was compiled by Dr. Howard R. Driggs, now of New York University, at the request of a county superintendent of schools in Nebraska engrossed with the problem which we are discussing. A very recent compilation of this kind is that one called *Reading for Fun* published by the National Council of Teachers of English. In many states there are pupil's reading circle committees sponsored by teachers' organizations which issue helpful lists.

After the selection of books for the school library comes their care. This is a more difficult responsibility than anyone would realize who has not taught in a one-teacher school. Unless there is a very carefully planned system of keeping track of the books and seeing that they are returned in good shape and not misused in the schoolroom, the library will slowly disappear and very quickly be much the worse for wear. However, when such a system is once installed, and the children learn to keep and take pride in keeping their books available and in good condition, it will prove effective

and require little time to administer. A few lessons in the care of books, including the best way to open and break in a new book, also pay good dividends.

There are many schools where it is impossible to secure the funds needed to establish an adequate library. The easiest thing, and what is often done, is to struggle along without one and to deny the children the acquaintance with good literature to which they are rightly entitled. In several states plans have been evolved for supplying books to such districts from some central point. For instance in the state of Illinois any rural school may secure a box of books from the state library at Springfield at no expense except the payment of transportation charges both ways. In some states traveling libraries have been instituted. Trucks go from school to school at given intervals delivering and collecting books. For example in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, such a plan is in operation. In Andrew County, Missouri, a co-operative system of libraries has been worked out. Since 1929 each district which desires to do so may contribute \$5.00 to a

fund administered by the county superintendent and in return secure the use of about one hundred and fifty books each year. This has filled an important need for the rural schools of that region.

In conclusion we may reaffirm our contention that the rural child has as good a right to the best literature as anybody. It is highly desirable that the experience, imagination, and cultural background of the rural child be developed through a wide acquaintance with the rich materials of the literary heritage of the race. Literature has the same place in the life of the farm population of America as it has in the lives of those who are occupied with industry, commerce and the professions. It has been shown that certain difficulties exist that tend to interfere with the effective teaching of this subject in the rural schools. But it has also been shown, to some degree at least, that through the use of certain teaching procedures and the establishment of adequate library facilities, the teaching of literature in the one-teacher rural school may be extremely effective and the source of much enjoyment for all concerned.



Criteria for the Selection of Primers

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ONE OF THE most significant and far-reaching results of research in modern psychology is the changed conception of how children learn. It is not a "pouring in" process as previously thought, but rather a mental function which takes place during periods of activity or when interest is highly stimulated. This newer concept of the process of learning is responsible for the many changes in our modern educational program.

The whole elementary system is in a state of transition in regard to content, method and organization. One of the major demands on the elementary school is that it acquaint children with the society in which they live. This has meant notable changes in style and content of our reading materials, from those based mainly on Mother Goose and other nursery rhymes, fairy and folk tales and those composed of disconnected sentences to the inclusion of factual material based on the child's own experiences, his natural environment and his curiosity.

The place of reading has been greatly enlarged and the quality of reading instruction vastly improved. Reading is the most important subject in the whole curriculum, since nearly all other subjects are dependent on it as a source of information and clarification.

It is desirable that stories for young children have a realistic content which will add something to their knowledge and will help them in their relationships

in the world about them. On the other hand, children relish fanciful tales and it would be a great misfortune, indeed, to deprive them entirely of such material. These stories should be presented as "stories" and not as something that actually happened. Young children become confused because their experiences are so limited that they are not able to differentiate for themselves between what is true and what is fanciful.

The first step in a valid program of instruction in reading is the cultivation of a keen interest and desire to read, and a rich stock of concepts which will make reading symbols meaningful. This having been accomplished the reading process is much simplified. Favorable attitudes having been established, the next step is the provision of much simple and interesting material. Stories must be within the child's experience and ability to comprehend, as reading is essentially a matter of meaning. The child's first contact with reading should be of such a nature that he reads for meaning from the outset, instead of merely calling words from a time-worn and often repeated story. The sentence structure needs to be short and simple and the vocabulary easily within his understanding. It should be such as to promote rapid learning. This implies a high rate of total reading words to different words and also frequent repetition of new words introduced. Words introduced should be repeated soon so as to clinch them. Light vocabulary burden per page makes for ease and fluency in reading.

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Although the definite number of word repetitions needed for mastery cannot be given because of differences in rates of learning, word difficulty, associations, method and time of presentation, it is known that frequent repetition is necessary for assurance in mastery. Therefore, those books with high ratio of repetition are to be desired, all other qualities being equal, especially for the mediocre and retarded children. Table I gives a numerical account of the vocabulary burden of a number of primers.

In this analysis of twenty primers of recent date, there were found 985 different words; of these, 410, or approximately 41% of the total number, appeared in but one primer. Ninety words or 9½% of the total number were proper nouns. Only 166, or 16-2/3% of the words were common to ten or more primers. This interesting list is given in Table II. This analysis shows a marked change over the results of the vocabulary study made by H. E. Wheeler and Emma Howell in 1930¹. They reported ten primers having a combined vocabulary of 1139 words. Erich Selke², the same year, reported a total of 1207 words found in twelve primers, 582 or 45%, any one of which was found in but one book. Fifty-two or 4% were common to all twelve primers. The number of different words found in any one book ranged from 171 to 594. Only two exceeded 400 and eight had less than 300. In a previous study³ made by the same author in 1922, only two had less than 300 words and six less than 400, with four ranging from 400 to 630. A total of 1,636 different words were found with 38 or 2% com-

mon to all twelve and 783 or 47% in one book only. In a study made by John A. Hockett and Deta P. Neeley⁴, of ten primers with copyright dates prior to 1932, the number of words ranged from 219 to 413 with eight below 284. The average word repetition ranged from 12.6 to 24.2. In the present study, the vocabularies of twenty primers ranged from 166 to 289 with an average repetition from 11.8 to 32.8. This shows a noticeable trend toward the introduction of fewer words in beginning books with increased repetition. If modern theories regarding reading are to be put into practice, without confusion to the learner, there is need for much overlapping of vocabularies in primary materials. There have been too few words common to all beginning books and too many appearing in only one primer. Educators seem to be approaching an approximate agreement as to the number of different words a primer should introduce. If this number were to be reduced too low, it would defeat its own purpose.

There is some justification for introducing a limited number of words without high frequencies. Although a child does not learn all the words which he meets only a few times, they may serve a useful purpose without becoming a part of his permanent vocabulary, as for example "hippity-hop" or "spectacles."

Although a complete check was not made with the standardized word lists, a partial check showed the usage of a number of words which do not appear in the high frequency lists. Certain words have a special appeal to young children because of sound, movement, color, or rhythm. Such words are necessary in writing really literary material for little children, even though they do not appear

¹ H. E. Wheeler and Emma Howell, "First Grade Vocabulary Study," *Elementary School Journal*, Vol. XXXI (Sept. 1930), 52-60.

² Erich Selke, "A Comparative Study of Vocabularies of Twelve Beginning Books," *Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. XXXII (Dec. 1930), 369-70.

³ Erich Selke and G. A. Selke, "A Study of the Vocabularies of Beginning Books in Twelve Reading Methods," *Elementary School Journal*, Vol. XXII (June 1922), 745-49.

⁴ John A. Hockett and Deta P. Neeley, "Selecting the Next Primer," *California Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol. III (May 1935).

in the standardized lists. Strict adherence to scientific vocabulary lists is not wholly advisable because many words are coming into wide usage which are not included there. The introduction of much social study material necessitates the use of such words as "radio," "studio," "scooter," "airplane" and the like for continuity of thought. The inclusion of such words in the standardized lists will be necessary.

Although vocabulary is a major factor in the evaluation of primary reading material, it is by no means the only important one to be considered. A primer may have a perfectly controlled vocabulary, overlapping with many other books, and yet be entirely lacking in interest appeal, correctness of construction, or richness of material. These qualities are very important, as is also the adaptability of the material to the particular needs of the group. Some books are written primarily for urban children, others consider the rural child; some are of interest to a particular region, such as a mining district, or a northern or southern state; and there are the religious editions.

Stories should be highly charged with interest, based on realistic, child-interest experiences, in which something really happens, for vividness and interest are strong cues to word recognition. The content should be substantial and worthwhile, abounding in information. The home and its surroundings, pets and their care, play activities, transportation, and community helpers as well as sources of foods, offer opportunity for much valuable growth and serve as a connecting link between the child's own home experiences, the community, and his newer school life.

Pictures play a very important part in our beginning books. Many of our best-paid artists of today are illustrators of

children's books. Pictures, which are well drawn, clear cut, and colorful, bring a concreteness which would be impossible to gain in any other way. Good pictures are full of suggestions, inspiration, and story action and show children doing things the way real children do them. Pictures, to be of the utmost value, must correlate exactly with the context, otherwise they are confusing to the child who reads, "Jane has a red ball," and sees a picture showing her holding a green one or perhaps a doll. The function of pictures is to interpret and supplement the content as well as to serve decorative purposes. There should be variety in the pictures, in the style, the content and the placement; some can be at the top of the page, some at the bottom, others swung across two pages. There may be variety in size, and variety within the picture, some showing large single objects, others showing several, some with, and some without backgrounds. There may be a few still life illustrations, but those showing activity have the greater appeal. Children, as a rule, do not like silhouettes, because they have no eyes or features. Pictures, at all times, should be large and free from detail. Small, intricate, dull pictures should be avoided.

Sentences should be characterized by simplicity, varied sentence patterns, unbroken phrases in sentences of more than one line in length, and rhythm. Very short and simple sentences are to be used exclusively in the beginning of the book and their length and difficulty gradually increased. No complex or compound sentences should appear in the primer. Varied sentence patterns, within the limits of simplicity, are desirable in maintaining interest and avoiding monotony. Naturalness of expression should be maintained, and pointless twisting of words within a sentence, in order to increase word repe-

tion, is of little value. Sentences should be phrased in ways which best facilitate fluency in reading. Inane repetition is to be guarded against as it contributes little or nothing.

The regular form of indentation is desirable as it is the form which the child will be required to use later. Formerly, many beginning books have made use of the "hanging indentation" or that in which all lines after the first are indented. This makes an uneven margin and offers difficulty for the child in adjusting the return eye movements.

Pronouns at the beginning of sentences are often so far removed from their antecedents that they are confusing and cause recognition difficulties; this type of sentence structure should be used only in the latter part of the primer. Whenever a person or persons are mentioned at the beginning of a sentence, the name is preferred, as "Jane" in place of "she." Restriction of modifying adjectives, to simple and highly descriptive ones, greatly facilitates recognition in the early stages of reading.

The primer stories should be a series of rather short unit experiences, several of which are held together with some central theme. In the beginning one page should constitute a unit. Children's span of interest is of short duration and when coupled with the task of reading, does not last over an extended number of pages. Carefully developed materials show a gradation not only in vocabulary and sentence structure, but in children's interest as well. The child's interest should always be paramount.

Statistics show that by far the largest percentage of failures in the public schools are in the primary grades, especially in the first. Here, one out of every eight fail the first semester and one out of six the second semester. Since

reading has been the measuring stick for promotion in most cases, it follows that failure to meet reading standards is responsible for failure. Are the standards too high, or our methods and equipment inefficient? Educators and psychologists are fast passing through the stage of analyzing symptoms and are now concerning themselves with studying the causes and providing solutions. Remedial reading clinics are being founded in many localities to try to correct the reading problems, and preventative measures are also being taken.

It is found that the reading of an abundance of interesting, simple material is essential to rapid growth in habits of fluent, accurate reading and growth in interpretation. Fluency in reading stimulates a liking for reading and a love for books. If the material is to be simple, there must be frequent repetition of the words in an interesting manner. Word drills, word games and phonetic exercises do not stimulate interest to the extent that reading does, and are therefore less satisfactory and less effective than practice in word recognition through the actual reading of interesting story material.

The problem arises of providing an abundance of simple, interesting, and worthwhile material which has the necessary repetition. Thus it was with this idea in mind that the following analysis was undertaken and the following tables made of the overlapping of vocabularies of the newer primers. A comparative study was made to determine the amount of vocabulary correlation presented by each and the best sequence to use in providing the child with a number of primers with overlapping vocabularies. The study also makes it possible to select a primer for the superior child who needs to be challenged by the introduction of a larger vocabulary.

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF PRIMERS

TABLE I
VOCABULARY BURDEN OF EACH PRIMER

NAMES OF PRIMERS	Total number of running words	Number of different words	WORD FREQUENCIES												Ratio of new words to old, or average repetition	Average number of words introduced per page.
			Words used once		Used 2-4 times		Used 5 times		Used 6-9 times		Used 10-19 times		Used 20 times or more			
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Good Companions	3,608	166*			21	12	15	09	45	27	46	27	60	37	21.7	.7
Curriculum Readers	4,170	175			5	03	10	06	30	18	46	26	68	38	24.0	1.2
New Work-Play Books	5,960	186			4	01	1	00½	46	25	51	26½	83	45	32.0	1.2
Happy Hour Readers.....	5,258	192*					48	28	29	14	24	12	87	45	26.3	1.6
Friendly Hour Readers.....	7,338	205*			9	04	4	02	24	12	53	26	122	60	35.8	.7
Happy Road to Reading.....	4,673	209*					29	14	44	21	53	25	74	36	22.0	1.2
Reading Foundation	5,958	219*					21	10	42	19	70	31	86	40	27.2	.9
The Webster Readers.....	4,616	219*	14	06	15	07	15	07	45	20	65	30	65	30	20.2	1.6
Elson Basic	5,322	220			17	08	11	05	45	20	62	29	85	37	24.2	1.6
Everyday Life	3,864	220*	3	01	37	17	23	10	40	18	71	32	52	23	16.9	1.5
Guidance in Reading	5,312	228*					38	16	53	23	50	22	87	39	23.3	1.7
Child Development.....	4,619	239	4	02	18	08	29	12	62	26	65	27	61	25	27.5	1.5
Unit Activity	4,836	242*					53	22	60	25	77	31	52	22	19.7	1.4
New Path to Reading.....	6,278	249*			4	01	22	09	55	22	74	30	94	38	25.0	1.0
Basal Activities	4,670	263			8	03	42	16	73	28	86	32	54	20	17.7	1.8
The Work-Play Books.....	4,151	269*			101	34	13	05	47	18	59	22	49	18	15.4	2.2
The Quinlan Readers.....	6,788	272*	12	05	20	09	7	03	75	28	64	23	94	32	26.0	1.9
Childhood Readers	3,285	277*	11	04	61	22	27	10	76	27	67	24	35	13	11.8	2.0
Children's Bookshelf	9,370	289*					24	09	67	23	94	32	104	36	32.8	1.5
Child Story	3,646	289*	40	13	72	25	16	05	57	20	51	18	53	19	15.0	2.3

* Those numbers marked with an asterisk do not agree with the publisher's count because of difference in methods used. In this study, all derivations are counted as new words, except the addition of s to the singular to form the plural.

TABLE II
NUMBER OF WORDS COMMON TO ANY TWO PRIMERS

[illegible]

TABLE III
Words Most Commonly Used
Total Number of Words = 985
Words most commonly used = 166 or 16.2/3% of total

21	22	15	16	6	13	10	15	19	14	15
words used in 20 primers 2%	words common to 19 primers 2%	words common to 18 primers 1 1/2%	words common to 17 primers 1 1/2%	words common to 16 primers 1 1/2%	words common to 15 primers 1 1/2%	words common to 14 primers 1%	words common to 13 primers 1 1/2%	words common to 12 primers 2%	words common to 11 primers 1%	words common to 10 primers 1 1/2%
a and at do go I in is like little me mother not on one see the to want with you	are away but came come can did dog for he my no put said saw she some they this was we will	am down find girl good have it look milk of out ran up went what	all bow-wow boy day father had here house looked man play red run thank then yes	baby her his into make wanted	children cow eat going him home laughed may morning rabbit store white your	big now oh played so that then there two who	back by doll from fun get give help jumped made ride school tree where	after be box cat cake could egg gave green happy hen how let Jack must something soon stop us	blue brown funny goodby has kitten pet playing read table take three water very	ball called chair door every farm got jump liked new please pretty say story train

19 words or 2% were common to 9 books
 19 words or 2% were common to 8 books
 30 words or 3% were common to 7 books
 29 words or 3% were common to 6 books
 38 words or 4% were common to 5 books
 53 words or 5 1/2% were common to 4 books
 84 words or 9 1/2% were common to 3 books
 137 words or 15% were common to 2 books
 410 words or 41% were common to 1 book only

Note the small number of nouns in the lists.

In the investigation reported here, twenty primers with 1930 and later copyright dates, were used. This date seemed to mark the division between those primers founded on Mother Goose, fairy, and folk tales, from those based on social study or realistic materials. It is evident that the vocabulary content of the two types is somewhat different and makes for a smaller degree of overlapping.

PRIMERS ANALYZED

U. W. Leavell, E. G. Breckinridge, Mary Browning, Hattie Follis, *Ben and Alice*. "The Friendly Hour Series." American Book, 1936.

Edna Baker, Mary Maud Reed, and Clara Belle Baker, *Friends for Every Day*. "Curriculum Readers." Bobbs Merrill, 1935.

B. R. Buckingham, and B. H. Buckingham, *Play Days*. "The Children's Bookshelf." Ginn, 1934.

Anne Dorothea Cordts, *The New Path to Reading*. Boston: Ginn, 1935 (revised).

Julia Letheld Hahn, *Everyday Fun*. "Child Development Readers." Houghton Mifflin, 1935.

Mildred English, Thomas Alexander, *Jo-Boy*. "Happy Hour Readers." Johnson Pub. Co., 1935.

F. N. Freeman, G. E. Storm, E. M. Johnson, W. C. French, *Terry and Billy*. "Child Story." Lyons and Carnahan, 1935 (revised).

Grace Storm, *Bob and Judy*. "Guidance in Reading." Lyons and Carnahan, 1936.

G. J. Hecox, M. C. Gareissen, *Our Pets*. "Good Companions." Newson, 1930.

A. I. Gates and M. B. Huber, *Peter and Peggy*. "The Work-Play Books." Macmillan, 1930.

Katherine E. Dopp, May Pitts, and S. C. Garrison, *Little Friends at School*. "Happy Road to Reading." Rand McNally, 1935.

Mable O'Donnell and Alice Carey, *Alice and Jerry*. "Reading Foundation." Row, Peterson, 1936.

W. H. Elson, L. E. Runkle, and W. S. Gray. *Elson Basic*. "Curriculum Foundation." Scott, Foresman, 1935 (revised).

Wm. Grady, Paul Klapper, and Jane Giffird, *Pets and Playtimes*. "Childhood Readers." Chas. Scribner, 1935.

Nila Banton Smith, *At Home and Away*. "Unit Activity Series." Silver Burdett, 1935.

Clarence R. Stone, Annie Lotter Stone, and Ida Vandergaw, *Tom, Jip, and Jane*. Webster Publishing Co., 1932.

Wm. D. Lewis and E. M. Gehres, *Pets and Playmates*. "Basal Activity Series." John C. Winston, 1931.

Ethel Maltby Gehres, *Everyday Life*. John C. Winston Company, 1936.

A. I. Gates, M. B. Huber, and C. C. Peardon, *Jim and Judy*. "The New Work-Play Books." Macmillan, 1939.

Myrtle Banks Quinlan, *Day by Day*. "The Quinlan Reader." Allyn and Bacon, 1939.

Assuming that any of the twenty primers might be used as the basic text, the question arises, which of the other books best follow the basic primer from point of increase in vocabulary count, and basic words dropped? Charts were made, placing each of the twenty primers in first place as the basic text and following it with those which have the fewest new additional words. Space does not permit the inclusion of these charts. Book selection committees wishing to consult them may write the author.⁵

Although overlapping of primer vocabularies for the purpose of selecting simple reading material was the object of this study, this phase cannot logically be separated from that of word frequencies. The word repetitions were counted for each book and are recorded on Table I. Table I also shows the average word repetition, the average introduction of new words per page, the number of different words used by each book, and the total number of running words. This table gives a numerical picture of the vocabulary burden of each primer.

All derivatives from root words made by the addition of such suffixes as *ing*, *ed*, and *ly*, were counted as separate words, except in the case of the single *s* added to form plurals or possessives. Thus, *look*, *looked* and *looking* were counted as separate words but *looks* was not.

An alphabetical list was made of the vocabularies of all the twenty primers. The vocabulary of each book was then checked against it and a comparison made with that of every other primer. The number of words common to each two primers is recorded on Table II.

A list of all the words common to ten or more books is given in Table III.

⁵ Address P. O. Box 224, Chicago, Ill.

Vocabulary Problems in the Elementary School

A Digest of Current Research

J. C. SEEGER

Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

(Continued from October)

Other investigations have approached the problem largely from the standpoint of reading vocabulary.

Thorndike's (224,225) *Teachers Word Book* is probably the most significant of all these studies. Counting the separate frequencies found in over 10,000,000 running words, Thorndike has listed with considerable authenticity in frequency order the 20,000 words most frequently found in English reading material. The significance and importance of Thorndike's list is hard to overestimate and yet it should be pointed out that many misinterpretations have been placed upon it. Thorndike states clearly that it is not a spelling list, not a graded list, not a list arranged in order of difficulty, that it pays no attention to semantic variations or inflectional forms. His presentations have been perfectly clear and yet many people have read into his list all of those elements mentioned.

Recognizing the need of considering semantic variations, Thorndike and Lorge (134) have undertaken an extension of the original study "concerned with the discovery of the frequency with which each of the various meanings of multi-meaning words are used in a representative sampling of English and American writing." Lorge says "The semantic count will enable the teacher to do at least two things: to teach the most important words, and, to teach the most important concept of these words. Since a sound educational psychology cautions against overloading the learner with materials that are not essential, concepts or mean-

ings of words with materials should be graded for importance, so that the teacher may teach them in order of importance or need."

About five million running words are included in the selections analyzed. "Detailed notes" are being kept of words not included in the dictionary, "chiefly, names of persons and places, new and foreign words, and compounds (not recorded as compounds in the dictionary.)" A similar tabulation includes acquired meanings. This work has been going on since January, 1934, and is still incomplete. It is planned that the material shall be published as portions are completed. Information can be secured by addressing Dr. Irving Lorge.

A useful list of words is found in the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language*. (263) This preliminary study is significant not only because of the word list itself, but for its clear recognition and discussion of vocabulary problems, its classification of words, and its statement of problems which need to be studied. Especially interesting is the attention paid to various meanings attaching themselves to individual words. A number of carefully selected word lists, including Horn's and Thorndike's, were used, and the purpose and specific use to be made of words was given considerable attention. While the purpose of the study is that indicated by the title, the usefulness of the volume for the general student is great.

Staats (210) studied two criteria for choosing beginning reading vocabulary,

a pre-school vocabulary based largely upon the studies of Mrs. Madeline Horn and a reader vocabulary. She found that children combined many words in groups of two or three to present one concept, that 20% of the pre-school words occurred outside the 5000 limit in the Thorndike list. The usefulness of both lists is obvious, but complete reliance cannot be placed upon them. The use of the pre-school vocabulary as a source for beginning reading vocabulary has considerable significance. The reader list was derived by tabulation from a number of readers. Nearly 90% of the words in the pre-school vocabulary are in the Thorndike list and many of the remaining 10% are compounds of Thorndike words. About 20% of the pre-school words occur outside the 5000 limit of Thorndike's list.

Walker (241) found that the words used in the children's spoken vocabularies were well represented in some primary readers, and represented poorly or not at all in others. He indicated the desirability of such representation. The children's vocabularies plus the Gates list were recommended as a basic vocabulary. However, Stoneburner (216) and Waldron (240) found considerable discrepancy between speaking and writing vocabularies and insisted that failure of authors of primers to investigate and to employ words alleged to be spontaneously used by children constitutes a serious defect in such primers. All of these studies suffered because of the few children involved and the fact that the children in general were from superior homes.

Doane (53), comparing the Los Angeles word list with the Gates, Thorndike, and Horn lists, presents evidence of the usefulness and effectiveness of that list.

Gates (82, 84), on the basis of a series of studies, listed the 1500 word vocabu-

lary which he considered basic for children's reading. These 1500 words were selected from 4300 words most frequently found. In the selection he employed the judgment of a number of experts. The 1500 are listed in the order of importance. A strong factor of Gates' study is that he recognizes that as far as children are concerned the use of a word is as significant as the form. The 1500 words comprise only 1263 different word forms.

Gates points out that his list is not primarily a spelling list because "the words represent meanings and for the most part derivatives were not rated separately from the primary form." It is not any indication of weakness in his list to find many words having high range and recurrence in children's reading, but certainly not likely to be used by many children in writing. This simply reflects the nature and purpose of the research.

A list by Durrell and Sullivan (61) shows clearly the impracticability of assigning words to grades on the basis of the thousand group in which they appear within the Thorndike list. As Durrell and Sullivan point out, the authors of books felt no compulsion to standardize vocabulary at grade levels; in fact, they possessed no standardizing instrument.

A comparison between the Durrell-Sullivan list and the Buckingham-Dolch free association study discloses further discrepancies, probably because "these words go into the child's writing vocabulary through the medium of his reading" and more reading experience is necessary before the child is sufficiently familiar with the word to use it in writing. A fact of considerable significance is that the Buckingham-Dolch words not found in this reading list may be words which should appear in reading materials for the grades under consideration. Of course,

as Durrell and Sullivan suggest, the fact that Buckingham and Dolch included all words used by three or more children might have weighted their list in the direction of the upper levels of intelligence. Almost surely bright children in the Buckingham-Dolch study would have used words in this amount.

In the Durreil and Sullivan (63) list, a selected vocabulary for each of the intermediate grades, the words are derived from 17 fourth grade books, 20 fifth grade books, and 19 sixth grade books. Words in the Gates primary list are not included, the list being additional to the Gates list. Words were included in the list at each grade level which appeared in seven or more books.

The following table is quoted from the *Third Yearbook* of the Department of Superintendence. It represents the composite findings of many studies and probably is not absolutely accurate. However, it is still significant and probably not highly inaccurate.

TABLE I
RELATION OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WORDS AND
NUMBER OF RUNNING WORDS

	No. of Different Words with Frequencies	Percentage of Total Words Tabulated
1. The	3 commonest words	10.3
2. The	10 commonest words	26.0
3. The	25 commonest words	36.0
4. The	50 commonest words	46.9
5. The	100 commonest words	58.8
6. The	200 commonest words	69.9
7. The	300 commonest words	75.3
8. The	500 commonest words	82.5
9. The	1000 commonest words	89.9
10. The	1500 commonest words	93.2
11. The	2000 commonest words	95.3
12. The	3000 commonest words	97.6
13. The	4000 commonest words	98.7
14. The	5000 commonest words	99.2

II. VOCABULARY DIFFICULTIES IN SUBJECT FIELDS OR TEXTBOOKS

Mehl (146) found that a number of first grade readers published recently (1931) presented vocabularies which in general did not coincide closely with words children are alleged to use in

everyday life. Mehl investigated studies of children's usage and compared those studies with the vocabularies found in the readers. He found the situation stated above to be rather general. The conclusions pointed to the fact that the reader vocabulary demanded that background information be supplied or else that the vocabularies themselves be changed to coincide more closely with experience.

Several studies, including Becker's (12) (1936) study of 31 books designed for pre-primer reading, indicate that such books provide insufficiently for repetition, and that many of the words were "too difficult for children of pre-primer grade." While this is primarily a matter of reading, its implication for vocabulary development is clear.

Farrelly (66), in a study of the vocabularies of 20 primers, recommends the use of many primers for the reason that they do introduce different words, but also emphasizes the need of more repetition than is provided by the books themselves.

Pflegler (167) states that the tendency of recently published (1935) readers is toward a greater number of pages, lower average of different words, and increasing attention to repetition. The average number of most words per page and the vocabulary load are lower in the more recently published books. The tendency of the newer books is to use proportionately more words from the first 2000 of the Thorndike list.

Sherman (201), in an investigation of nine fifth grade readers, found that 37% of the words appeared only once. She found that many of the words had to do with concepts pertaining to modern inventions and life outside of school. She, as well as Armogost (4), who studied sixth grade books, stated that many foreign words were introduced.

Hayes (92), studying the grade placement of primary reading matter, states that in developing reading materials for a given grade authors are far from consistent. There is much divergence in the number of words used and the repetition the words receive. Much of the material is too difficult for the grade. Hayes says the vocabulary problem seems especially acute in the first half of the first school year.

Wozencraft (259) states that 1734 different words found in first grade readers and primers used in Texas necessitate 2835 different concepts. Of these words 258 occur only once, 79 are common to all texts.

Durrell and Sullivan (63) pertinently state that basal reading systems should not only provide for different rates of learning new words, but should recognize different types of problems in word mastery. Essential in this process is an at-

tack upon verbalism and emphasis upon thorough comprehension.

Whipple (248) has determined clearly the need of books carrying a relatively light vocabulary load. In recent years there have been some attempts to recognize individual differences through the medium of easy books designed for the high grades as well as easier books designed for the lower grades. The need is for more books of this sort, for less attention to grade placement, more attention to reading ability.

Thorndike (226) has recently published (1936, 1937) a study conducted with W. P. A. aid in which were counted 4,500,000 words from 120 books written for children in grades three to eight and recommended by Terman and Lima. He shows that the vocabulary burden is far too heavy for children. He found 18,000 words beyond his first 20,000 most frequently used words in the writings of adults.

(To be continued)

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

New York City, November 24, 25, 1939

PROGRAMS OF INTEREST TO ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Luncheon, Friday, November 24. Elementary Reading

Presiding, Barbara Nolen, Literary Editor, *Story Parade*

People in My Books—Kate Seredy, author, *The White Stag* and other books

Strange Lands and Strange Creatures—Wilfred Bronson, author, *Paddlewings*, and other books

Children with Stories in Their Heads—Phyllis Fenner, librarian, Manhasset, N. Y. school libraries

NOTE: Friday afternoon, November 24, the American School of the Air will broadcast Kate Seredy's *The White Stag* during the conference on radio in the schools.

Saturday morning, November 25. Problems in Teaching Elementary Language.

General Chairman, Mary D. Reed, Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute

Chairman, Paul McKee, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley

Life Lines in Language Work—H. R. Driggs, New York University

Language as Social Adaptation—W. E. Young, State Department of Education, Albany, N. Y.

Reading and Language—A Unified Program—B. R. Buckingham, Ginn and Company

General Discussion.

Council papers at the elementary level are published in
The Elementary English Review

Editorial

Open Forum on the Newbery Award

FOR SEVERAL years past, discontent over the Newbery awards has grown stronger, and perhaps because free, outspoken criticism has apparently been frowned upon. Somewhere along the line there has grown up the impression that these awards are to be accepted as ex-cathedra judgments, and that they are to be held as authoritative and final. This has been unfortunate, for discussion is always wholesome, even when centered in dissent whether of the minority or of the majority. Consider, for example, the press reports on the annual Pulitzer awards. Each year some disagreement is expected as a matter of course. Not infrequently debate becomes sharp, but the effect on public interest is highly stimulating. Furthermore, everyone who follows the discussion, whether or not he cares to voice a personal opinion, is sure to be enlightened. The result is the development of a more highly intelligent audience awaiting the decisions of the committee each year.

Under these circumstances, the committee must surely gain something in stamina, faced as it is by a challenging, and never docile public.

After all there is but one great issue and that is the best interests of our growing boys and girls. Everyone who knows the donor of the Newbery medal knows that his inspiration was the boys and girls in our American public schools. Frederic Melcher for years has had a very close association with the schools of his community. Rarely does he miss an opportunity to bring to his home town visitors whom he knows to be inspiring and entertaining to young children, resourceful in stirring their imaginations and instill-

ing a love for good reading. He introduced Vachel Lindsay to them, Carl Sandburg, and others. Incidentally, the children know and appreciate Frederic Melcher himself.

But recently the ideals of Frederic Melcher seem not to have been followed by the committee making the Newbery award. Books for boys and girls were his inspiration and his enthusiasm, but these have been passed by for books almost forlornly reminiscent of the childhood of adults. This is lamentable. For one thing, the children themselves cannot but be disappointed in books that are so highly sentimental and reminiscent of childhood. Confronted with these award books, they will come to regard all literature as "sissy." For literally, over and over again, they are confronted with these Newbery award books; their librarians, their teachers, their parents continually hold up these books as the best.

Two reactions will be inevitable: One, the children will either avoid all books with wry distaste; or two, they will seek a strong counter-irritant in ten-cent thrillers.

Another bad effect is likely to be even more wide-spread. Authors, seeing the highest honors in children's literature bestowed on books that lack well-constructed plot, character development, distinction of style, and vigor of thought, will not think it worth while to strive for these things in children's books. Indeed, it seems as if the awards have already had this bad effect, for there has been a noticeable increase recently among children's books, of trivial subject-matter, linear narrative, and flat characters.

Shop Talk

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE JUNIOR RED CROSS

SINCE ITS FOUNDING in 1917, the Junior Red Cross has endeavored in many ways to serve humanity. Immediately after organization the millions of boys and girls who composed it were busy making a great variety of articles for those who had been called to the colors, collecting money to carry on their work and in other ways having a part in the activities of the Red Cross for the men in the trenches and cantonments.

At the conclusion of the war the question came up whether to disband. But the answer was unanimous to keep on. So, after the guns ceased firing efforts were largely concentrated on helping the thousands of children in Europe whose lives had been warped and shadowed by the horrors of four years of war and want.

It mattered not what language they spoke, what race they were, what country they inhabited. They were children in need of help, in need of food and clothing, of toys and games, of recreational facilities to develop their starved bodies and souls. And results of this help began to show in all the war-seared regions.

Schools were rebuilt and reopened. Food and clothing were furnished. Recreational facilities were provided. Every effort was made to restore some semblance of normality to the lives of these innocent victims of the stupidity of the world's leaders.

This work laid a lasting foundation for friendship, a foundation which has been built on ever since. Letters of thanks from the European school children told how they were benefiting from their gifts. Gradually the interchange of correspondence grew so that today it is conducted on a world-wide scale.

This Junior Red Cross correspondence is a school or class project. Illustrated letters, bound in volumes, and other materials cover topics that interest entire groups, those preparing them as well as those receiving them.

Preparation and use of materials are helpful in the study of English, geography, citizenship, history, art, industry, and virtually every other school subject.

The contact is broad, between two groups instead of between two individuals. This immensely increases its value. And its greatest accomplishment lies in its education for international understanding and goodwill. Those taking part are all members of the same world-wide organization, and are all engaged in their own communities in putting into practice their ideals of service.

Correspondence may be carried on with more than one country at a time. Often different classes in the same school conduct these interchanges with separate countries. Experience has shown that at least two consignments of material each year should go forward in such exchange of correspondence, and this should continue for at least two years. This gives plenty of opportunity to ask and answer questions and thus deepen understanding.

There are more than 40 countries with which this project is conducted, but not all of these countries are open at all times, for they, in turn, are carrying on their own correspondence with the same number of countries. National Junior Red Cross Headquarters has available at all times an up-to-

date list of countries that are anxious to correspond with schools in the United States.

There are many other activities which keep the more than 7,000,000 members of the Junior Red Cross busy. One of their projects is to supply every blind pupil of high school age or lower with a Christmas book in raised type. The paper is bought from Junior Red Cross funds, the printing is done by volunteer chapter workers, and the books are bound by the Junior members.



Red Cross

These younger members frequently assist in the annual home and farm accident prevention campaign of the Red Cross. For this campaign, which occurs in the fall, they distribute millions of check lists of those hazards that are responsible for most accidents at home and on the farm. Many groups also take up local projects.

Junior Red Cross membership is held through adhering schools. Membership in the senior branch of the organization is by affiliation with local chapters. This year it is planned to increase the adult member-

ship by 1,000,000. This is contemplated so that the increasing demands on the Red Cross may be adequately met, and at the same time, a sudden emergency will find the organization prepared. All are invited to join the ranks of their local chapter during the annual Roll Call which takes place from November 11th to November 30th.

—DOUGLAS GRIESEMER
*American National Red Cross
Washington, D. C.*

PROBLEMS IN ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

(Continued from page 256)

Likewise there is a challenge to teachers of expression to seek for the creative possibilities as yet untouched in the units in use in the schoolroom, for the sake of the gifted, capable of such expression. For instance, reference has been made to factual reports on the lives of explorers in connection with a fifth grade unit on the Age of Discovery. Was there ever a story more fraught with emotional and imaginative stimulus than that of this age of colorful adventure into the unknown? Yet the work in English expression correlated with it was concerned only with the factual presentation of vital statistics in the life of Sir Francis Drake, though inherent in it was the mental and emotional stimulus revealed in one of the greatest sonnets in the English tongue, penned by a poet whose stirrings of mind and heart enabled him to unite in spirit with the explorer as "he star'd at the Pacific . . . silent upon a peak in Darien." Shall we not insist upon the recognition of the aesthetic and emotional element in the materials with which we deal? And shall we not stimulate the hearts and

minds of boys and girls to respond to it as they are eminently qualified to do—in language that goes beyond the mere recording of facts, important as that in itself may be?

I would urge, then, as a result of my experiences in the New York Regents' Inquiry, that we recognize as basic to any language program the development of a rich and meaningful classroom environment which will make expression both natural and inevitable, and that we study in such an environment the emotional and psychological factors which help or hinder the normal use of language in a social situation. I would urge also that we sense in the unit or activity program a tremendous asset to the providing of such a background; but that we demand of it at the same time a broadened vision of the areas of reading interest normal to boys and girls, a distinct recognition of specific outcomes in language, and consideration of those creative phases of expression which furnish an emotional and aesthetic outlet for a significant proportion of the children in our schools.

Reviews and Abstracts

English for Children. A Teacher's Book in Language for the Primary Grades, by Sister Mary Vera, S.N.D. and Sister Mary Marguerite, S.N.D. Scott, Foresman and Co., Chicago, 1937.

At last a handbook for the teachers of language in the primary grades—a handbook based on the tenets of the National Council of Teachers of English. Well written, the book is timely and unquestionably a valuable contribution to the primary field.

The authors in defining "integration" and "correlation" leave no doubt in the minds of the readers as to the meaning of these two comparatively new members in the parlance of the educational world. What is more delectable—the writers have the courage to admit what we all know and experience but hesitate to express for fear of being labeled traditionalists, unprogressive and reactionary. This compromising truth is that as much as we would like to be progressive and provide integrated programs, we find it impossible to achieve, and our attempts at best result in correlation, which, if the teacher does not take precautions, will represent the "humbug" of Louis Agassiz.

From long, actual classroom experience, Sister M. Vera and Sister M. Marguerite conclude that "A truly integrated program is a difficult kind of program to inaugurate and to develop successfully. . . Thorough preparation and training and deep culture are requisites for teachers engaged in this type of program. Most teachers find it difficult to organize and administer the units which constitute such a program. . . In the truly integrated program only a very skillful teacher can lay a foundation in the elementary rudiments of knowledge essential to a practical education." (Pp. 444-445.)

According to them the correlated program has its "will-o'-the-wisps," but it is built more easily and allows for more systematic development of fundamental habits and skills—that is, if you are so antediluvian and outmoded as to believe in fundamentals!

Convinced of the feasibility of correlation they place an emphasis throughout the book on the development of basic skills in self-expression through natural correlations. These they clearly discuss in the respective chapters, and their discussions are made concrete by stenographic reports of actual classroom application of the principles of language development.

Part II of the book is devoted to the building of interest and appreciations. Among the many fine suggested means and devices for the development of appreciation and interest, choral speaking is mentioned. There lies, it seems, a serious danger in referring so positively yet altogether too briefly to choral speaking

in a handbook for the average teacher. The harm done to children in a poorly conducted "choral speaking" period is too apparent. A teacher who has had no training in speech work and choral speech techniques is apt to understand choral speaking as an end in itself. In doing so, she takes her cue from the many polished renditions of verse choirs on the radio programs advertising choral speech courses. Unless she has a deep insight she will not realize that verse speaking in groups calls into play speech correction techniques with which she is mildly acquainted or not at all.

On the whole the handbook is very well prepared. The teachers in the early grades will do well to acquaint themselves with it and consult it frequently.

—SISTER M. FIDELIA

*Lourdes High School
Chicago, Illinois*

Handbook of English for Boys and Girls. Prepared by a Committee of The National Conference on Research in English, Delia E. Kibbe, Lou L. LaBrant, Robert C. Pooley, Chairman. Edited by C. C. Certain. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1939.

Before I was asked to review this book, I had already of my own motion written the publishers endorsing it strongly. In my judgment it marks a most commendable innovation. As such its advent is long overdue. I wonder (now that I have seen it) that I had not myself induced some one long ago to attempt the like.

Some years back certain of my publisher friends came to me in no little distress. They said, and truly, that the new developments in education threatened to make the textbook a back number. They asked whether a new type textbook, or substitute therefor, was not a possibility. I should then have foretold for their benefit—and ours—this student size reference book.

The present vogue of work-books, as I see it, is an attempt to keep alive the textbook business on the old basis—and the devil must smile (if I may speak after the manner of the Middle Ages) to see how successful his effort has been. For most work-books seem exactly subject-matter-set-out-in-precise-form-to-be-learned.

But this Handbook of English is no work of the devil—to seem to give, and really withhold. It gives the child what he can use, when, as, and because he needs it. It does not take the initiative out of his hands, it helps him forward precisely when he is showing most of initiative. The ability of opposition to mis-

conceive and misunderstand amazes almost beyond belief. One form the opposition to better education takes is to spread the idea that to learn through experience means such a starting over from scratch that each child is expected to invent for himself everything that mankind has been devising since the beginning of time. This is pure invention. No proponent of a better education ever so understood learning in or from experience. It is the part of intelligence to utilize the stored up experiences of the race, but it has to be learned in and for—and so from—the experience of the learner if it is really going to be learned.

It is from this point of view that this Handbook marks the end of one era and the beginning of another. It marks the end of the textbooks era, and the beginning of the new era of child initiative with child-size reference books cheap and easily available for use. As I said in my endorsement to the publisher, if I had my way this book would be in the hands of every upper elementary school child throughout this country—and when they learn to use it, they will keep it for reference as they grow older.

—WILLIAM H. KILPATRICK,
Professor Emeritus
Teachers College
Columbia University
New York City

Word-Group Concepts Contained in Certain Pre-Primers, and Word-Group Concepts Contained in Certain Primers. Doctor's Field Studies I and II. By Ruth L. Sims. Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado. Directed by Dr. W. T. Tait, 1938. Unpublished. Filed in education library.

Character of Research. Word-group concept-analysis of seven pre-primers and six primers published between 1930 and 1936.

Problem. To determine what word-group concepts are necessary in order to read certain pre-primers and primers.

Limitations of Study. (1) Word-group defined subjectively. (2) Word-group classification determined subjectively. (3) Only thirteen books were analyzed. (4) Results of value only to teachers who use these books.

Procedure. Books selected are those used most commonly as early reading material in the schools of Ponca City, Oklahoma. As used in this investigation a word-group is defined as one or more words representing a thought unit. The word-group classification was determined by the relation of the word-group to the experience in which it was employed, i.e., if in the opinion of the writer, a word-group was so closely related to the experience in which it was employed that it clearly identified itself with such experience, such word-group was classified as an "independent" word-group. Example: "Little Mew is a kitten." If, on the other hand, a word-group though contributing to the experience in which it was employed, might be employed with equal effect in other situations, such word-group was classified as a "dependent" word-group. Example: "She can run." Information recorded for each word-group was: the word-group; its classification; its concept or concepts; pages of content wherein concept was employed; the concept frequency; and total number of concepts. From this information four detailed summaries were made. The concise summaries for each group of books included these items for both the independent and the dependent word-groups; number of different word-groups; number of concepts; number of word-groups appearing more than once; concepts represented by more than one word-group; range of word-groups having the same concept; number of word-groups having more than one concept; number of concepts for each word-group having more than one.

Conclusions. (1) This investigation reveals the specific word-group concepts which a child needs in order to read these books. (2) This investigation reveals that few word-groups have more than one meaning. Of the total number of different independent word-groups, 2,197, only seven have more than one concept. These seven word-groups have two concepts each. Of the total number of dependent word-groups, 3,634, none has more than one concept. (3) This investigation reveals comparatively little repetition of word-groups. Of the 2,197 different independent word-groups, 114 appear more than once. Of the 3,634 dependent word-groups, 422 appear more than once.

—ABSTRACT

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Of The Elementary English Review published monthly from October through May at Detroit, Michigan and Seymour, Ind. for October, 1939.

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} ss.

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